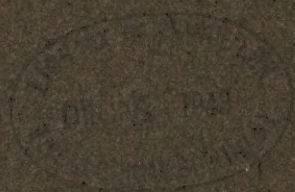


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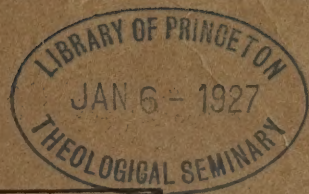




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# The Culver-Stockton Quarterly



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A SOCIOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION  
OF THE WORKS OF  
JOSÉ MARÍA DE PEREDA  
(SECTION I)

— BY —

MAURINE MAYS

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## A SOCIOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE WORKS OF JOSÉ MARÍA DE PEREDA

(Section I)

By Maurine Mays, M. A., Professor of Modern Languages

### Introduction

José María de Pereda, in many respects the greatest of the modern Spanish realists, was an ardent reactionist, satirizing modernism and exalting the forms of the early society of Spain. He had no faith in social evolution and progress. Visible in all his works is an inflexible conservatism set against all innovations as certain to bring evil.

It shall be my purpose to analyze his works in terms of his social philosophy and to demonstrate that Pereda represents merely a type which is a product of a given social situation and which has in the past always appeared and can always be expected to appear in that similar social situation.

### I

#### THE BACKGROUND

Pereda might have said of his works, as Goethe said of his own, that they were a series of confessions. Many writers have social philosophies, or esteem certain principles, which they set forth in the words of the characters they depict. They disparage some ideas by making them the principles upheld by rascality. They ardently advocate other ideas by making them the principles upheld by piety and morality. The characters of such novelists are mere mouth pieces by which the author's ideas are advanced.



Pereda's education never led him far into theories of political and social science. His peculiar aversion to scientific learning particularly disqualified him for an appreciation of such science. In his views of society he was guided by his heart rather than by scientific truths. His intense preference for the simple and unspoiled greatly prejudiced him against the tendencies that made for destroying that simplicity—namely, the tendencies of progress and modern civilization. Thus the social theories expressed in his novels are often thin and irregular, and in his treatment of social problems sentiment dominates the lessons of experience.

Above all things Pereda advocated simplicity in living. A simple life was his social philosophy. Simplicity in living meant preserving as nearly as possible the primitive patriarchal society.<sup>1</sup> It meant restraint in ambitions; it meant moderation in desires. Progress and growth toward modernism effected a downfall of the patriarchal system and a violation of restraint and moderation. Since those things which were the outgrowth of modern civilization were directly opposed to simplicity, Pereda's attitude toward modern progress was hostile and reactionary.

This reactionary attitude must be explained by the circumstances of his own life in the most northern province of Spain. Pereda was born on February 6, 1833, in the province of Santander. This province, hemmed in by the ocean and the Cantabrian mountains, isolated from the rest of Spain and from Europe in general, had conserved a primitive form of society. Here life was in the fashion of old Spain, "severely patriarchal in its simplicity, lived modestly and tranquilly, without dangerous innovations".<sup>2</sup> In many instances Pereda shows the complete isolation of this section of Spain. For example in the incident connected with the return of a ship to

1. In all references to the patriarchal system may it be understood that Pereda does not use the term in its presently accepted sociological sense. He represents it as political or communal rather than familial in organization.

2. *El Diario Montañés*, Santander, May 1, 1906.

Santander, the principal city of the isolated region, he reveals the degree to which this section was excluded from contact with the rest of the world. Travel to and from this province was not extensive because it required a long, wearisome journey on horseback over rough mountain trails, and naturally the sea became the chief means of access and egress.<sup>3</sup> The coming of a ship was a great event in the small communities, for its coming brought to these people a touch of another world known only in their imaginations. As soon as a ship was seen far off, all the inhabitants gathered on the quay: the priest, the shoemaker, the rich, and the poor. There they waited and eagerly greeted returning sailors, engraving in their memories the weird stories they told of a strange world.

Pereda's boyhood was spent amid the peaceful, rustic surroundings of the villages of this isolated section. When he was about ten years old his family moved to Santander which, although the metropolis, had, nevertheless, conserved the original simplicity of the northern province. Here he received his primary education. In 1852 he was sent to Madrid to pursue his studies. In his two years' stay in the capital of Spain he gained a considerable knowledge of the political and social conditions of the time. In those two years he became thoroughly disgusted with Madrid and that part of Spain into which modern tendencies were rapidly advancing. There was foundation for his disgust. Let it be recalled that during the years in which Pereda lived, Spain presented a picture of disorganization and confusion, for,

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3. In *Peñas Arriba*, p. 23, this toilsome journey is described at length. The young man, the principal character of the story, was making the journey from Madrid into the mountains to the home of his fathers. Beyond the last railroad point was still a whole day-and-night's journey, to be made on horseback over a narrow mountain trail. On one side rose the steep bare side of the mountain; on the other yawned an abyss through whose narrow passes sounded the continuous roar of maddened waters. He climbed a steep mountain, crossed a peaceful valley, only to find an even greater mountain towering in front of him. It seemed an endless climbing up and down. At night the darkness was so intense that travel was extremely dangerous. A stranger never attempted to make this journey without a native of the region as guide. In *De Tal Palo Tal Astilla*, p. 3, there is a like description of the mountain trip. The journey of the doctor from the lower part of the district to the extreme heights is pictured as a tortuous and perilous journey.



it was in the throes of political passions and internal revolutions.

In order to understand Pereda's disgust it is necessary to be acquainted with the history of Spain in that age. When Napoleon autocratically overran Spain in 1808 the Spanish people suddenly awoke to their national pride and spirit and began their war of independence from the foreign usurper. This war put into the hearts of the people the germs of political agitation and aspiration for political rights. For nearly seventy years Spain was torn with strife. The desire for political rights took form in the Constitution of 1812, a constitution far in advance of the country's need. Those who created the greatest agitation for a constitutional monarchy were the middle class (if it may be called a middle class) in the great sea ports. The mass of people did not know the meaning of a constitution, therefore they were not concerned with a constitutional struggle. In 1814 Ferdinand VII took the throne. He set aside the constitution and re-established absolutism. There were a few outbreaks and revolts in his reign. About 1820 a revolution restored the constitution of 1812 for a brief period. In 1823 occurred another French invasion. The Holy Alliance sent France into Spain to settle affairs, and soon absolutism was restored and Ferdinand remained in power until his death in 1833.

The legal heir to the throne was Ferdinand's daughter, Isabel, a child of three. She was proclaimed queen by the assent of the majority of the Spanish people, with her mother, María Cristina, as regent. Carlos, brother of Ferdinand, a representative of absolutism, claimed the throne and was supported by a powerful party whose chief strength was in the Viscayan provinces, Navarre and Catalonia. The first Carlist war lasted until 1839. The absolutism which María Cristina inherited from Ferdinand was tempered by a desire for the support of the Liberals, and as the struggle continued there was an approach to constitutional forms of government. María



Cristina was lacking in sincerity and she was unscrupulous and capricious. There was a succession of short lived ministries owing their existence to royal caprice and political mutinies. In the chaos the only sign of progress was the liberal regime which succeeded in forcing itself upon María Cristina. Her government continued until 1840 when she was driven from the country. For three years Espartero acted as regent. His regency was a period in which liberal tendencies continued to prevail. In 1843 Isabel was declared of age, but soon proved herself an inefficient ruler. With her accession the absolutist policy of the government became marked. Absolutism lasted until 1854, when the crisis came. There was such wild disorder that the queen recalled Espartero, which meant a more liberal form of government. But in 1856, just two years later, she dismissed Espartero and named O'Donnell the prime minister. Again absolutism was renewed and continued until the year 1866. In that year a movement was launched which drove Isabel from the country. This was the time when Liberalism might have shown its worth, but again it failed. It was a period of socialism, anarchism, and military dictatorships—universal tumult. Finally in 1875 Alfonso XII was made king and Spain became a constitutional monarchy. In the absence of a ruler the Carlists renewed their activity, but Alfonso took command, and in 1876 the second Carlist war was ended. With its end the last hope of absolutism died, and peace and order were finally restored in Spain. Liberalism had failed to establish a government that could govern; it had failed to provide an honest government; it had failed to provide for the debts and to regulate the finances. It was these failures which especially impressed Pereda.

Periods such as these always yield sponsors of reactions, persons who credit the disturbances of a transition period to the inherent nature of the proposed new order. They long for the security of the "golden age" and propose to return to it. The failure in the first attempt at

an application of a given political theory is interpreted as evidence of its unworkability. Pereda belongs to this class of persons. Witnessing the corruption practiced on all sides, the crude and gross demagogism, and the odious stage of degradation, it is not surprising that his sympathies were with the old forms, that he took a dislike to liberal or democratic government, and that he was strongly opposed to what the world calls democracy and modern progress.

Disgusted with progress as he saw it in the capital city he returned to Santander in 1854 where, with brief intervals of absence, he spent the rest of his life.<sup>4</sup> Pereda was fortunate in the possession of ample wealth which permitted him a lettered ease. Prompted by such favorable conditions he early began to write. His first literary ventures in the form of sketches of local types and manners were originally published in the home papers and later collected in a volume and given to the public under the name of *Escenas Montañesas*. This has taken rank as one of the most important and characteristic of his works. As a costumbrista, or writer of short stories suffused with local color, he revealed himself a writer of power and pathos. After several efforts, which were literary practice, he undertook the novel. The works of his first period are: *Los Hombres de Pro* (1872), *El Buey Suelto* (1877), *Don Gonzalo González de la Gonzalera* (1878), *De Tal Palo Tal Astilla* (1879). The two defects of these are a controversial spirit in social and political questions and a lack of evenness in structure. To the second group belong his masterpieces: *El Sabor de la Tierruca* (1881), *Sotileza* (1884), *Pedro Sánchez* (1883), *La Puchera* (1889), *Peñas Arriba* (1895). In these Pereda stands forth as an undisputed master of his craft. With the exception of *Pedro Sánchez* these works have a natural setting in the Moñtana, and bear his most personal message. In this second era were

4. In 1871 he was sent to Madrid as Carlist representative of his province to the Cortes. The cultivated gentleman of letters, the high-minded hidalgo, finding himself not in his element, brought his political career to a speedy close.



written three novels, *La Montálvez* (1888), *Nubes de Estío* (1891), *Al Primer Vuelo* (1890), which do not belong clearly to either the first or second group since they share the defects of the one and the virtues of the other. These are fruitful sources for revealing the author's attitude on the great social questions of the time, and in them we find his preachments against contemporary conditions.

In 1897 he was received into the Spanish Academy, an honor due one of the most brilliant and original of national writers. His literary work virtually ended with his volume of 1895, *Peñas Arriba*, the most worthy and finished product of his career. He died March 1, 1906.

## II

### SOCIAL ATTITUDE

Most of Pereda's works have for their setting the isolated northern province of Spain where were found the simplicity and moderation that characterized for Pereda the best form of society. Such well-defined geographical barriers as those of that province naturally tend toward isolation because they guard society from all outside influence.

Given a type of society, isolation makes for its permanency and solidarity. Isolation is the cue to the understanding of Pereda's social philosophy as depicted in his novels. It excludes the society he idealizes from communication and association with the outside world. Pereda's ideal was Spanish insularity, isolation so complete that the social group had no regard for foreign opinion and no regard for the course of the world's affairs.

Pereda's views were not unusual, for Pereda is a type found in every society. Always may be found those who believe the existing society the best and who resist all social change in that society. In every progressive movement there are some who are conservative, who advocate the maintenance of the status quo, who believe that society is in its finest state, and who ardently oppose any change.

Pereda's attitude may be described as ethnocentric. By this term is meant blind loyalty to one's native group. An individual who travels extensively does not tend toward ethnocentrism for he has had an opportunity of comparing other countries and other sections of the world with his own and of discovering that there are other parts just as good as that he calls home. Pereda had travelled little. His farthest journey had been to Madrid, and he had visited Madrid at a most unpropitious time. Hence the society in which he grew up was practically the only society with which he had acquaintance. Know-



ing no other, he idealized that society in which he lived and recognized none as better.

Ethnocentrism is not an archaic trait, but is the very foundation of modern patriotism and religious loyalties. Every nationality demonstrates this principle. When the American says "America first" he is saying no more than "America is the best country in all the world; all other countries are inferior." The French proverb "*Ce qui n'est pas clair, n'est pas francais*"<sup>1</sup> and the German "*Deutschland über alles*"<sup>2</sup> are like statements expressing the idea of the superiority of one nation. These statements are not reasoned out and thought through; they are convictions about which nations concede no explanation or discussion. Accordingly, Pereda admitted no questioning of his conviction that this northern province of Spain in which he lived represented a society superior to all others.

In accordance with his intense nationalism Pereda desired that there be no outside influence in Spain or any contact with foreign nations. He rarely mentions another country by name. In *Bocetos al Temple* he speaks of the United States as an immense depository of all the great rascals of the world, a country that was nothing more than a labyrinth of big things and bad things.<sup>3</sup> Always with contempt he speaks of the "indianos", those persons who went to America and, having amassed great wealth there, returned to Spain to live in splendor. This aversion to the indiano was not peculiar in a man with a viewpoint such as Pereda had, for the returned indiano had no place in the social order and was the cause of a peculiar social problem.

Pereda's views regarding the indiano are consistent with his whole social philosophy. In this case as in others his reasoning seems valid and is supported by gen-

1. "That which is not clear is not French."

2. "Germany above all."

3. P. 237. In *El Buey Suelto*, p. 345, he satirically mentions a Spanish colonist "*que alardea de no creer en Dios porque estuvo en los Estados Unidos seis días.*" He contemptuously mentions Cuba when he speaks of emigration, for many Spanish went to Cuba to seek their fortunes. He never specifically mentions France or any other European country, but in general statements he makes plain his dislike of foreign nations.

erally accepted sociological principles. Granting him that which he assumes as his major premise one can do no less than agree with him in his argument.

Any contact or communication of long duration between individuals of separate and distinct groups brings an exchange of thoughts and ideas and a change in these individuals. An individual entering a new group comes into contact with traditions and influences entirely new to him. Assimilation is the process which refers to the growing alike in thoughts, character, and institutions. It is a psychological process to be distinguished from amalgamation or blood mingling through intermarriage. The results of this intellectual process are far more lasting than the biological ones. The changes involved in assimilation are subtle and gradual. It is an unconscious process. A person is incorporated into the common life of a group before he is aware and with little conception of the change that is taking place.

Thus a person who left one of the villages of northern Spain and settled in America would unconsciously be assimilated by the new group. By this process of interpenetration and fusion he acquired the attitudes, sentiments, and traditions of other individuals and, by sharing their experience and their history, became incorporated with them in a common life. Therefore when he returned to Spain he no longer fitted in with the old group, but had to be re-assimilated. In the process of his re-assimilation he would unconsciously communicate to the group new forms, attitudes, sentiments which they in turn, through unconscious imitation, would accept. Thus the indiano disturbed the security of the group, shocked the habits of thought, and brought a certain degree of disintegration by presenting foreign moral patterns.

Pereda's argument is based upon the premise which may be briefly stated thus: the society and social order as seen in the villages and more isolated provinces of Spain are the best that can be obtained, and any change



is necessarily for worse and not for better. For this reason, i. e., that he was a menace to the continuity of society as it then existed, Pereda opposed the indiano. Thus it is his premise that cannot be accepted and not his argument.

A typical indiano is found in the character of Don Gonzalo who, because he was ambitious and aspiring to show and ostentation, emigrated to the United States to seek wealth. In the projects he has in mind as he comes back to his birthplace there is evidence of the disturbing element he will become in the society to which he returns. There is also evidence of the foundation for Pereda's fears that the returned indiano would communicate new attitudes, feelings, and social forms to the group. Like all other indianos Don Gonzalo has the desire to make his home village more modern and progressive: "Soteruco will be as I left it, half of it fallow and half to be worked over; the people are like melons walking on two feet by a miracle; a priest who fills their heads full of stories; and a señor who has a few lands and a big house and so thinks himself destined to guide the people . . . but I'll present myself with a half dozen English trunks; I will buy many lands and build a big house. The people will take off their hats to me half a league away. Everywhere I will introduce modern customs; I will reform the manner of thinking of those backward people."<sup>4</sup>

Pereda, therefore, is antagonistic to emigration: first, because the returned emigrant, or indiano, brings new social knowledge which he communicates to the group, thus changing the nature of society; secondly, because he is not in sympathy with one who is not content to stay where he was born. He criticizes the desire of youth to go to America to seek a fortune as a futile and dangerous dream. He disapproves of discontent so poignant that it terminates in leaving one's native land, subjecting one to the evils of a world that is full of new

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4. Don Gonzalo González de la Gonzalera, p. 112.

and extravagant ideas. He holds to the theory that by digging in the corner of his own garden one may find a treasure which another may seek in vain the world over, and that the way to obtain the greatest value of life is to limit one's interest to that which he has at home.<sup>5</sup> In the story, *A Las Indias*,<sup>6</sup> the mother, as she returns to her home after seeing her son depart for America, "feels in her heart such grief and bitterness that she can do no less than apostrophize the earth she is treading, seeing the ruggedness and the apparent sterility that are driving her son from her to search in a far country for that which the motherland cannot give him." "An unjust charge," exclaims Pereda, "which perpetually in the mouths of such ignorant ones sustains in this province the plague of emigration."<sup>7</sup>

This antagonism towards foreign nations may be styled race prejudice. Race prejudice results from isolation and tends to reënforce it. Pereda's ethnocentrism so influenced his international attitude that he wished Spain to remain insular and individualistic, and he was prejudiced against all non-Spanish contacts, against everything which would tend to modernize the existing society and destroy its individuality.<sup>8</sup> He preferred to keep the people uncontaminated by foreign influence and thus to foster and preserve the local and racial pride.

The ideals of Pereda were embodied in the principles which Don Ramón of the novel *Don Gonzalo* employed in the guidance of the country folk of his community. These villagers were content with their surroundings, they were peaceful, and they were happy in the form of society that then existed in the village. To keep them in this state of simplicity and content he tried to protect them from all communication with, and all knowledge of, affairs beyond the mountains that would

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5. *Peñas Arriba*, p. 159.

6. *Escenas Montañesas*, p. 96.

7. *Ibid.*

8. In *El Sabor de la Tierra*, p. 84, one of his characters laments that "man is degenerating day by day, and soon will be ended those virtues that made Spaniards of other times model gentlemen without fault or defect. No longer is there any faith in the old or any true love for the fatherland."



tend to disturb that tranquillity and simplicity. So in the "tertulias" or nightly gatherings of the villagers in Don Ramón's kitchen, held for the purpose of making plans and discussing town problems, he discouraged all comment concerning what took place in Madrid.

One evening a villager, very curious and interested in things that did not concern him, asked Don Ramón about certain affairs of the nation of which he had heard some rumors. Don Ramón reminded him that in his house it was forbidden to speak of politics, and explained to him that such rumors were not reliable, since most of the notices were false or at least only half true, thrown out like sugar plums by crafty politicians in order to provoke unrest and discontent. And, he persisted, there in those sections society existed in a form too precious to be disturbed by the flashes and thunderings of progress elsewhere.<sup>9</sup>

Since education might influence this seclusion and isolation from the world and bring with it modern tendencies, Pereda is scornful of learning. He is contemptuous of the egotist who affects to possess a large amount of knowledge and who likes to air that knowledge. Pereda believes that much learning of any kind other than that which is specifically essential to earning a livelihood is not only a waste of time, but a positive detriment to him who possesses it. For learning, he maintains, brings to him who would otherwise live simply and moderately a spirit of unrest and discontent and makes of him an element at variance with the rest of the social group. This lack of content and the discordant element thus engendered, Pereda contends, contribute to what he calls a corrupt society.<sup>10</sup> Pereda clearly manifests his attitude toward learning when he says, "There is nothing that hampers one so much as learning" and "the desire of learning is nothing more than a keenness there is in peo-

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9. Don Gonzalo González, p. 34.

10. These influences he believes to be unsound and corrupt: first, because discontent would lead some of the simple villagers to the city; secondly, because to some it would suggest changes at home.

ple to mix up in something in which they have no business."<sup>11</sup>

In the words of Don Baldomero, an old philosopher, he further ridicules learning and demonstrates that it is an unnecessary achievement. "The trouble with learning is in the thing itself, which is so valueless. Let a wise man say, after searching for twenty years, hidden away behind his telescope, 'I see in the sky one little star more',—what does it matter when half the stars is more than enough. Let him say that a comet is going to appear next month. We'll see it anyway if it appears, and if we don't see it of what use was the announcement? Of what value to know that the sun weighs so many millions of kilograms! Let someone say that Aristotle or Plato said such and such a thing . . . then one hears opinions, disputes, and arguments! Is not this learning foolish, ridiculous, and stupid? Let man be accustomed to live with that which he has in reach and you will see that he does not in the least value this clamor of scientific conquest with which the present century is strutting so much."<sup>12</sup>

Likewise he reveals his opinion of scientific conquests and the value to be received from them when he suggests that scientists themselves, those of greatest wisdom, often tremble at the dykes they have broken and are frightened at the ravages of the waters they have loosened.<sup>13</sup> Through one of his characters he scornfully dismisses the Darwinian theory of man as beneath the dignity of discussion.<sup>14</sup> He contemptuously declares that "the wisest men have been those who have made the greatest errors."<sup>15</sup>

In Dr. Peñarrubia of *De Tal Palo Tal Astilla* Pereda presents a typical man of science. It is in this novel that Pereda treats most extensively of men of learning, shows his disrespect for such men, and points out that science

11. *El Sabor de la Tierruca*, p. 31.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

13. *De Tal Palo Tal Astilla*, p. 164.

14. *Tipos Trashumantes*, p. 315.

15. *El Buey Suelto*, p. 219.



is an achievement which results in evil rather than in good. This doctor, through long devotion to physical science, had become an atheist. Upholding the preposterous beliefs and standards gained from the study of medical science, he had become a discordant individual within a group of harmonious people. So uncongenial and non-conformable had this so-called learning made him that he could not be assimilated by the society in which he placed himself. Rather, he was as completely isolated from the social group as though geographical barriers kept him from communication with the group. He was feared, distrusted, and disparaged by the people of the community. In Pereda's opinion this state of non-conformity to the other members of society was due to one cause—too much modern science. To be content with things as they were without trying to delve into the scientific why and wherefore, to accept conditions unquestioningly, and to have no interest in the absurdities of science, insured simplicity in the social group and harmony of individuals within that group. Only upon these conditions, he alleged, was based a meritorious society like that of Santander and of Old Spain.

Throughout his works Pereda is unsparing in his sarcasm towards doctors, lawyers, and men of great learning.<sup>16</sup> Physicians he eyes critically, ready to denounce them on the least provocation. He admits the need of their medical aid, but he does not recognize the necessity of scientific research in their profession. Lawyers he look upon as political rascals ready to exploit the people at all times.

In this illustration is manifested Pereda's claim that the society of old Spain is best preserved by scorning

16. This is one of the contradictory points in Pereda's nature. Though not a scientist he was widely read and possessed a broad cultural knowledge, being well acquainted with French, English, and Italian letters. Various allusions to the classics and the classical writers prove Pereda's acquaintance with them. His mother was an intelligent woman and devoted to literature. Some of his most intimate friends were men of learning and of great literary achievement. There is Galdós for example, who was extremely progressive, desiring modern tendencies to invade the most excluded and isolated sections of Spain. He felt that Spain needed the scientist, the engineer, and the man with progressive ideas. Deep affection between two men of such fundamentally different views is exceptional.

the professions that require great learning and by adhering to the practical professions instead: Don Pedro, the great sea captain of the village of Coteruco, seeks advice upon the choice of a profession for his son. He is not able to decide whether it shall be that of a doctor, lawyer, or literary man. Don Venancio upholds Pereda's theories in advising him that book learning is the pest of the world; that it is mere humbug which brings naught but wretchedness with it; that a father ought to aspire to something worthier and more solid for his son. He proclaims commerce to be the best and most worthy career for the youth because commerce is the very soul of the villages. When the father suggests that in choosing such a profession there is the risk that his son may arrive at old age without having seen any of the world or having learned anything of all that which is in it and that is taught in it, the only reply of Don Venancio is one sarcastic word, "Nonsense!"<sup>17</sup>

Not alone for learned professions and physical science does Pereda show his contempt, but for anything approaching a social science and a social law. By "social law" it is understood that the term aims at nothing more than a description or an explanation of the manner in which humanity may be expected to behave; it foretells the behavior of an individual by means of a general rule of the behavior of all humanity. It is nothing more than a summing up of regularities of occurrence. Pereda dispraises such a formula as sad folly. He maintains that all men are not alike and that, therefore, that social law which applies to one may not apply to another.<sup>18</sup>

Distrustful and critical of modern tendencies, reluctant to admit progress to that section of Spain which he loved and of which he wrote, he advocated the patriarchal system that had few wants and displayed sim-

17. Sotileza, p. 168.

18. "As if all men were molded in the same mold and with clay in equal doses and quantities. As if the pin prick that scarcely makes bloody the skin of one person were not in another a wound that reaches the heart" is the statement he makes in *El Sabor de la Tierruca*, p. 58.



plicity in living.<sup>19</sup> He believed that such conditions could only be found in the rural sections, close to Nature, far removed from the temptations of the city, which produced conditions discordant with simplicity. Therefore, feeling that it was responsible for the evils and vices of the society of the day, he was hostile to the modern city. In its squalor, its splendor, its evils, and its violation of social laws he saw the result of departing from the simple life. Sane living he finds impossible in the city. As a consequence he condemns the city as the cause of all the social problems. He believed the salvation of society to rest with those who lived in the towns and villages where there were not the competition and vice that existed in those centers of progress and more modern civilization.

This was no new philosophy that Pereda advanced. It is precisely the idea that Oliver Goldsmith set forth in his *Deserted Village*. Both Goldsmith and Pereda glorified the homes of their youth. Perhaps they were not able to see so much wrong in the new order, but for the old they had a blind loyalty and deep affection. Loving the village as they did, principally because of its childhood associations, they glorified it and exalted it as superior to the city. Goldsmith, like Pereda, lamented the passing of the village for the industrial or factory town. He protested that the village possessed the conditions that made for a good society; he bewailed the life of the city as compared with the simple and wholesome conditions to be found in the villages; he contended that not in the immoral cities but only in the villages could be developed individuals and institutions that constituted a stable and a better society. His poem furnishes attractive pictures of simple, kind, noble characters like the parson and the school master, and descriptions of simple country scenes. He presents these in such a manner as to show their superior value to society.

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19. In *Escenas Montañesas*, p. 221, he expresses his view: "I am a fanatical admirer of the patriarchal life and of the pleasures of the country. Far from me the noise of a false world, dry affection, and the materialism of civilization." This statement sounds suspiciously like Rousseau. Cf. his *Back to Nature* movement.

Thomas Gray also expressed the same thoughts and feelings in his *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*. In a sympathetic way he presents the lives of the simple village folk, showing the great advantages, the fortune, the happiness, the recompense that came to the "even tenor of their way" and he praises the life of the folk who live in the rural sections, far from the ignoble strife of the crowd and "the shrines of luxury and pride."

Pereda particularly gives a picture of the depravity of city life in *Pedro Sánchez* in which he so graphically and so assiduously portrays the vices of Madrid.<sup>20</sup> The capital city of the nation, with its flagrant abuses of the principles of humanity, with its strife and revolution, with its immoral customs and its depraved atmosphere, was the center of disintegrating social forces. It is in this novel that he, who so idealizes the past, hurls his greatest criticism at Modernism and its results as he found them to be in cities.

The same distrust of cities is displayed in one of the stories of *Escenas Montañesas*. The principal character, Don Silvestre, had never been away from the ancestral home. But he had imagined and dreamed of all the greatness and glory of the city. When at last came the opportunity for him to visit Madrid he found only disillusion and disappointment. Of all that which he sought, of all that which was promised, what did he find? Only suffocating heat, noise of carriages, the danger of being trampled down in the street, the passion of monopolizing for self, the vandalism of peddlers, the inhospitality of everybody, materialism, and the usury of civilization. Pereda adds that the good man, because of his rusticity and simple education, did not see the depth of evils; if he were losing his illusion at the surface of the world what would happen to him seeing the very bottom of its tempestuous recesses? Don Silvestre voices his disappointment in this manner: "From my kitchen two as-

20. Pereda was in Madrid in 1854, the year of a revolution. So his acquaintance with the city was at its very worst time, in its worst stage of conflict and corruption.



pects of the city interested me: as a center in which were elaborated the politics in which I so blindly believed, and as a fatherland common to all men loving social liberty. Very few days did I need, in spite of my little experience in the world, to learn that first, politics here are a farce and, secondly, that Madrid as a tolerant center where everyone can have his own tastes and follow his own inclinations, is a joke. By this trip I have learned the worth of the uncultured corner of my forefathers—when trading it for civilization!<sup>21</sup>

Naturally it follows that Pereda believes the people themselves, surrounded by the corrupt influences of the city, become worthless and unsocial.<sup>22</sup> He contrasts the difference in the people of the cities and those of the villages in this incident: A man from Madrid, visiting in a certain small village, went to mass one morning with his host, and as he approached the church all conversation ceased, the men rose, the children stopped playing, and all respectfully greeted him. "This show of deference and respect affected the guest, accustomed only to the cold, egoistic contact of the people of the great cities."<sup>23</sup>

But Pereda somewhat explains and excuses this unsociability and this lack of affection for one's fellowman, for he says that "he who has had the misfortune of having been born and of having lived always within city streets and among temporary neighbors, without other horizon than the two extremes of the street, with no other sky than the miserly strip glimpsed between long rows of buildings; he who feels himself dragged by the abuses of worldly life, by the fever of politics, money, or by the artificiality of spectacles; he who lives acclimated to the noise of crowds

21. *Escenas Montañesas*, p. 217.

22. In *Peñas Arriba*, p. 130, he says "Dondequiera hay hombres cutlos o incultos, hay debilidades y grandes flaquezas; pero flaqueza por flaqueza, debilidad por debilidad es preferible la de aldeanos." Again he says that it is those who have lived closest to Nature who contribute the best to society, *Nubes de Estío*, p. 312, "Vaya la lista de los hombres que allí se descuellan y se mueven y se dejan ver en política en las letras, y en la banca . . . y en todos los ramos de actividad humana, y a ver quien de ellos ha nacido en Madrid! Ni uno que valga dos cuartos!"

23. *Escenas Montañesas*, p. 235.

and of machines and who, as if at variance with the sun, goes to bed at daybreak and gets up at fall of evening"<sup>24</sup> is not deserving of censure. Such a person has not had opportunity to develop social qualities of friendliness and of brotherliness. He has been forced to struggle for himself in order not to be submerged in all the conflict about him. He has had to so fight for existence that humanitarian principles could have no chance of development. Much greater has been the opportunity for social development of those who possess the life-giving power of the country, without the fetters and impediments of the so-called good living in the populous centers.

In another instance he contrasts villages and cities, comparing the pretentiousness and the affectation of the latter to the simplicity and praiseworthy life of the former. Of the growing town to which Simon and his wife move, Pereda says there was no room for flowers and grass and trees because the place was full of huge stone-front buildings where were sold all the luxuries essential to a haughty people. There were found unfriendliness and selfish interests.<sup>25</sup> In direct contrast he pictures the village of Cumbrales in which patriarchal simplicity prevailed. "There in each house is known what is happening in the rest. Wherever the family eats and prays, there come the poor to weep; the abused to ask counsel; the neighbors and friends to chat and talk over the happenings in the village, though that event be of no more importance than the mild trouble of the son of the Alcalde. All these people have rubbed elbows in the church, in the street, or in the town hall, and for that reason, in the villages are found common interests and affection among individuals. From this fellowship of interest and affection is born the intimate somewhat patriarchal unity, which is not fruitful of ingratitude, grudges, and offences."<sup>26</sup> With real affection Pereda speaks of beauty and simplicity of life in the village as

24. Discurso leído ante la real Academia española, p. 14.

25. Los Hombres de Pro, p. 26.

26. El Sabor de la Tierruca, p. 124.



compared to the superficiality of that of the city. "Harmony with everybody and tranquillity at home, Pablo, that is to live."<sup>27</sup>

In *Peñas Arriba* is to be found the highest expression of Pereda's social philosophy, his doctrine of the Simple Life. It has for its setting the loftiest part of the Montaña, the most isolated section of the province. Its whole theme is a plea for a return from artificial wants, social conventions, and petty ambitions, to the simplicity of patriarchal life with its natural expression of feelings and its spirit of brotherhood. The ideals of society so tenaciously supported by Pereda are illustrated in the life of a landowner and in his beneficent patriarchal relations to the rustic community. For years the ancestors of this landowner had held a sort of patriarchal sway over the people, and this chief of the clan thoroughly appreciated the mission his family had handed down to him. He presided over the evening "tertulia" of the villagers in the kitchen of his home; he kept close to the life of the community, encouraging one person, restraining another, aiding the needy, settling disputes, holding together all the inhabitants in one great family.

The old patriarch had no son to succeed him, so he called to him a nephew from Madrid. This nephew had seen much of the world, he had lived an empty and luxurious life in the splendor of the city. At first it seemed that the nephew was so at odds with the new life that he could never carry on the task which the old man wished to put upon him. But the subtle forces of the Montaña silently worked upon him. The helpfulness and self-sacrifice everywhere apparent, the simple faith and unthinking courage of the people, the moral grandeur to be felt in the very spirit of the region, took part in teaching this young man and in converting him from the city's artificiality to the rural wholesomeness, and in making an efficient and useful worker of an idle loafer of the cafés and theaters.

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27. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

Finally, we have Pereda's whole philosophy summed up in the words he has put into the mouth of a wise old man of Santander. In his words we find Pereda's own defense of the rural sections, his philosophy of the simplicity of living, his desire for the simpler forms of the civilization of Old Spain, his opposition to progress and its ensuing vices: "You folk of the city are always desiring something, and this something is precisely what we villagers have in abundance: peace of spirit. You have your sensibilities hardened, exposed to the friction of all the turbulent successions of the century in its hasty march; your soul is fatigued wandering through a space involved in difficulties, through atmosphere foul and noxious, through ideas revolving in an insecure and unbalanced orbit. So many things surround you that affection cannot be inspired before a new object presents itself, obliterating the affection of the first. We (thanks to that which today is called ignorance) have affections more limited, sensibilities almost virgin; the most common event of your life seems to us great. We, who are scarcely ambitious, are satisfied at once, but you whose ambition knows no limit will never be satisfied. That you may see how much truth there is in what I am saying, you would have to see along with this modern Santander, with its population of 40,000, with its monumental quays, with its showy rows of houses, with its cafés, casinos, paseos, newspapers, inns, and its bazaars of fashion, the old Santander, a colony of fishers, with six small houses of commerce whose stock was brought from Castilla by pack trains, without docks, without fashionable resorts, without other newspapers than the one received every three days from Madrid. Could you see both of these pictures you would not doubt which generation lived the more tranquilly and happily—if that generation which is covered with the tinsel of modern wisdom or that one covered with the rags of our old ignorance. We had poor and you have poor; miserly rich existed

then and insatiable rich now. But you have made the poor haughty, and the rich deaf to the voice of the unfortunate and blind to the aspect of misery. Light (i. e. science and learning) would be worth while if it found bread for hunger and a shelter to keep out the cold, but unfortunately this so-called light only serves to make misery and opulence more patent. In this age you see together one dying of hunger and another full to bursting. But in our inequality of fortunes there was good faith on the part of the rich and resignation on the part of the poor. Result: there were peace in the towns, happiness at the hearth, and great virtues in the hearts of all. If the real destiny of man is other than to make happy the family group gathered about the domestic hearth then I confess that our old patriarchal customs were a stigma that soiled humanity in the times of the so-called obscurity."<sup>28</sup>

With the condemnation of new civilization comes likewise a condemnation of the devices of its dissemination. Complete isolation, maintenance of national or sectional individuality, and an unchanging group can only be accomplished when there are limited means of communication. For it is by communication that social knowledge, new ideas, and new tendencies are disseminated throughout a social group and between different groups. Pereda, wishing to preserve intact the old society, opposed the railway, the press, and other modern inventions. For by means of these instruments it was possible for the villages of the mountains to be brought into closer contact with the outside world.

There abound many evidences of his distrust of modern inventions. Concerning the railroad he says, "the locomotive carrying in its entrails of fire the germs of a new life sweeps away as it passes the usages and customs which have reigned here during many years of a patriarchal and an interrupted tranquillity."<sup>29</sup> Again in a manner which expresses deep regret he speaks of

28. *Escenas Montañesas*, p. 25.

29. *Sotileza*, p. 259.



"railways, devices of revolutionary movements and transformers into modern societies."<sup>30</sup>

A certain admirable merchant of Santander, one of Pereda's finest characters, asserts that the commerce of the village would develop into pure gold if greediness did not cause the people to act unwisely, countenancing such a foolish idea as some people were advocating—a railway between Alar and Santander and a steamship line between Santander and Cuba. With deep feeling he exclaims, "Railways! Steamships! Ventures of insanity; tomfoolery of a restless people who wish to taste fortune and who will arrive in the end at the epitaph 'here lies a Spaniard who being well off, wished to be better' . . . if we go on managing with what we have, and being content with it; if we do not rush into disordered ventures such as that of the railway and of the steamship (which thanks to God do not go beyond an extravagant idea advanced by four loafers) we shall be thrifty and happy."<sup>31</sup> The words of this wise villager provide an occasion in which Pereda sets forth his own argument as to the value of the simple life and contentment with one's condition. Pereda is very sincere in his regret that railways are breaking down the old customs and institutions and providing for the entrance of the modernistic trend into society.<sup>32</sup>

In the same manner he protests against newspapers. They are agents of progress, for they, like the railways, are agencies of social communication.<sup>33</sup> The newspaper is judged to be the great medium of communication within a town or city, and it is on the basis of the information that it supplies that public opinion rests. Through the publicity of the press all the investigations, all the facts, and all the angles of a proposition are spread

30. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

31. *Sotileza*, p. 17.

32. In the story *Los Jándolos* (*Escenas Montañesas*, p. 320) regretfully he says, "Since the railroads cross our peninsula and penetrate into our province, no longer does the jándalo come on horseback or lazy mule, and thus he has lost one of his most vivid attributes."

33. "La prensa, metiéndose como siempre, en todo lo que no importa" he says in *De Tal Palo Tal Astilla*, p. 72.

abroad that the citizens may educate themselves, and that thus there may be formed a public opinion which rests on knowledge and calm deliberation. In this way the newspaper is a form of social control.

Pereda realized that public opinion was influenced directly through the medium of the newspaper, but he believed this influence was wrongly used. In his age instead of teaching and instructing the people it was an institution of falsehood and deceit. Instead of giving facts to the people that they might deliberately form an opinion, it sought to create agitation and unrest. It was an agency which disseminated throughout the group a social knowledge that was detrimental rather than helpful to society.

In *Pedro Sánchez* Pereda criticizes the press at great length. He uses it as the model of all newspapers and finds in it the faults common to all. In the first place the editors and the staff of the newspapers were not worthy or able to mold the public opinion of the group. In general they were unscrupulous, revolutionary, and incapable men. The editor of the newspaper of Madrid, he says, wrote of theology without knowing a thing about it.<sup>34</sup> As to their lack of conscience there is evidence in the statement made by the editor to Pedro upon offering a position for which Pedro believed himself not capable: "We'd be in a pretty mess if we had to know to the bottom all the affairs which we discuss in our newspapers! Of what use is skill, of what use subterfuge and false doorways of art and language but to enter wherever we take a notion, relate and discuss whatever we please, leave off whenever it suits us, without fearing that someone question us or close the door and cut off our retreat. One needn't be erudite in that which one writes up for the press, one needs only skill in the use of words."<sup>35</sup>

Don Silvestre, one of Pereda's characters whom he exalts for love of his birthplace and his adherence to

34. *Pedro Sánchez*, p. 81.

35. *Pedro Sánchez*, p. 81.

the standards of the simpler society of Old Spain, sees one night in one of the salons a man who, in the midst of a scandalous scene of drunkenness and immorality, is more loquacious, more jesting, more impudent, and more unpardonably vulgar than all the rest. On learning that he is the principal editor of the newspaper which he has so diligently devoured in his home, Don Silvestre in great disgust exclaims, "And do you mean that this newspaper which I read with so much faith in my home place is written by this man? That those articles in which the clamor for order, for morality, and for the good of the people is so great, were dictated by such impudent and demoralized anarchists? Those humanitarian words of philanthropy, brotherliness, religion, home, rights . . . far from being the truth in such papers are only sacrilegious mockery, an insult to God and man, an ignoble exploitation of the public faith."<sup>36</sup>

Pereda points out that the simple, credulous village folk could be easily deceived by false words. "They were not sufficiently worldly-wise nor experienced in artfulness to see that the newspaper of Madrid was the impression of letters placed mechanically, and behind it all a man of common stature and of vulgar ambitions. Rather, they saw in the editor of the newspaper a person outside all contact with that which is human, a person of supernatural intelligence, a person completely foreign to the divisions of civil life; for them the newspaper was the catechism, the gospel, a catalog of truths incontestable and indisputable."<sup>37</sup> Therefore the newspaper as it then existed, without standards of morals, justice, and truth, was a tremendous evil as a social institution.

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36. *Escenas Montañesas*, p. 208.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 193.



### III

#### SOCIAL CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS

Mores are social institutions respected and revered, transmitted from generation to generation. Institutions and laws are produced from mores, although often the rational element is so strong that their origin in mores is not easily distinguished. Property, marriage, and religion are the most primary institutions. They begin as folkways, become custom, and, by attaining a position of welfare for the group, develop into mores. Mores arise from need and then perpetuate themselves.

As members of society men act from instincts and sentiments they do not understand. From inherited custom men act typically, and so representatively, not as individuals but as members of a group. They represent the responses of the group to given situations. Therefore a picture of the social customs of a society is a picture of that society.

In order to indicate the society, the passing of which he so regretted, and in order to show the world what he called the best type of society Pereda pictured the customs of that society. One of the most interesting customs which he portrays and one that carries with it a vivid mental picture of old Santander and the primitive society to be found there is that of "La Buena Gloria." This custom probably grew up as the natural solution of a problem which is met today by insurance agencies. It was the means by which this simple society provided for widows and orphans. Today the welfare of a widow is not the concern of the group, but in that time she was dependent upon the support of the individuals about her.

"La Buena Gloria" is a very old custom whose origin is unknown. A certain bishop used all the force of his authority and fervor against such a profane ceremony but his efforts were in vain. "La Buena Gloria" in all its scandalous solemnity continued in spite of sermons and maledictions; it even succeeded in acclimating itself

in the modern atmosphere, and in Santander this custom still exists, though somewhat modified.<sup>1</sup>

Here is sketched the story portraying this primitive custom:

There had just been celebrated in the church the last funeral rites of a poor man belonging to the class of fisher folk. The cortège followed the corpse to the church, from church to cemetery, and from the cemetery returned to the house of death. At the end of the procession walked the men, immediately after them came the women—all dressed in their holiday clothes. In the home, in the very room in which her husband had died, waited the widow and her three small children—all dirty and poorly dressed. The cortège entered, the men lined along the wall, and the women formed a circle nearer the center of the room. The widow hid her face in her hands and uttered sighs and groans. One woman, a close neighbor and an intimate friend, acted as master of ceremonies. She stepped to the center of the group, and affecting great emotion, said in a strong rasping voice, "For the eternal rest of the dead man." At which the widow uttered another wiled moan, took off her mantilla, spread it on the floor, drew back a step, and, as if ending a prayer, she said, "For the mourners." Then the men and women began throwing coins on the mantilla and in a few seconds it was half covered with money. But the woman in the center cried "More, More!" There were half stifled cries and suppressed excitement in the crowd. The woman taunted them with being stingy and miserly in their gifts to the poor widow. Suddenly she asked how many people were present and being answered fifteen men and twenty women she cried, "Then there should be thirty-five 'reales' here instead of the paltry twenty-eight which I have counted on the mantilla." Other friends interposed for the widow, cursing the crowd for its niggardliness. Finally the woman emptied the coins on the mantilla into a fisherman's cap and whispered

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1. Escenas Montañeses, p. 316.

something to an old man who hurriedly left the room as if charged with a grave commission. While he was gone the widow and the crowd prayed: "May God our Savior take in his compassion the sacred offerings that have just been made for the soul of the dead one, may he rest in peace." "En el nombre del Padre, del Hijo, y del Espíritu Santo," said the widow crossing herself. The crowd repeated it after her.

The old man soon returned with a huge jar of liquor, a glass, a plate of cheese, and a six pound loaf of bread, bought with the money donated by the mourners. The bread and cheese and the jar of liquor were placed with certain ceremony upon the mantilla which the widow had again spread out. A glass full of the liquor was given to her. Mid halfwild exclamations and cries the crowd besought her to eat and drink. With loud wailing and great emotion (all mere affectation) she shrieked she could not drink. But the mourners excitedly entreated her to drink to the dead, and raising the glass to her lips she drank its contents at one swallow.<sup>2</sup>

The fun-loving Spanish people with their happy dispositions make much of all fiestas and holidays. Theirs is a land full of traditions, and they glory in the old customs. One beautiful custom was the celebration of Christmas eve when all the family gathered in the home to solemnize dutifully the "Nochebuena." In the villages the night had special incidents connected with it, and it was always the duty of any member of the family who may have been absent from the homeplace to return for this one night.

The whole family gathers in the kitchen to prepare the supper. What preparations and what gaiety! The dishes that Spanish people like best are prepared for the supper of Christmas eve. When everything is carefully seasoned and prepared they proceed to another operation no less solemn than the supper itself: setting the "perezasa" (table). The "perezasa" is a rectangle which hangs

2. Escenas Montañesas, p. 316.



against the wall, fastened to it on one side, and placed in a horizontal position by means of a leg. This table is a cherished piece of the household furniture and is used, in the villages, only on the day of the patron saint, on Christmas night, on New Year's night, or when there is a wedding in the house.

The supper lasts an hour or more. Everybody is talkative and happy. Soon there is heard a noise outside. It proves to be a band of about two dozen boys of the village who on Christmas eve go from house to house to serenade. They sing until they are given some of the sweets of the Christmas supper and then they go on to the next home. After they have gone, the family sits about the kitchen, chatting and talking, until the candle burns low and the children become drowsy. Then they seek the repose of their beds.<sup>3</sup>

To Pereda the appeal of this picture of a society, simple and wholesome, was much greater than that splendor to be found in modern cities. In sociological terms there is in this region of secondary contacts, in which relationships are relatively impersonal, formal, and conventional, an individual gain. For a person has an opportunity for personal freedom and individual distinction which is denied him in the primary group. But Pereda believes this advantage far inferior to the intimate, face-to-face association of primary groups, the family, the neighborhood, and the village community, which are fundamental in forming the social nature and ideals of the individual.

The "mercados" and fairs were great festival days to the villagers. Going to the market was not an every day affair to the villagers. In many of the little villages there were no markets; the villagers had to go to a neighboring town to buy. The day of the market was an occasion on which young and old dressed in their gala dress and went forth expecting a happy day. There were not

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3. *Escenas Montañeses*, p. 115.

many social distractions for which reason the people took advantage of such occasions as the "mercado."

In *El Sabor de la Tierruca*<sup>4</sup> María, and Ana, and all the young folk, gaily clad, are seen starting out early in the morning, walking down the long road to the market in the next town. On the road they greet others, bound for the same festival. There are women carrying baskets in their arms or sacks full of produce on their heads; there are other young folk from neighboring villages, as happy and as excited as they. Ana and María have long lists of things they wish to buy: from writing paper and pins up to the most necessary article of the household.

At last, the market! The cries are incessant. There, stall after stall, are all the things for sale: potatoes, flour, cheese, chickens, shoes, hats, mountains of bread—everything imaginable, and among it all the buyers and the curious ones coming and going, and the sellers shouting their wares.

The fair which did not occur so often as the mercado afforded an additional opportunity for the people to come together in a social way. Here they had the opportunity of meeting friends they did not often see. The older people carried on business projects and discussed town and community affairs while the young folks made love and danced and enjoyed the social affairs. The fair was perhaps the most popular form of entertainment for the village people. It was so important an element in their social life and customs that it is mentioned on numerous occasions in Pereda's novels.<sup>5</sup> In *Don Gonzalo* the fair is given its proper place in the social life of the people. Don Ramón was a great buyer and trader and therefore, attended all the fairs. It was at the fair that his daughter, Magdalena, became acquainted with her lover; it was there only that she could see him; it was

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4. p.223.

5. In *Escenas Montañesas*, p. 55, he says, "The fairs are as abundant as flowers. Open the calendar and wherever you run across a saint's day expect a fair."

there that she had the opportunity to mingle with, and enjoy the society of, other young people.

Pereda portrays the charm of such social communication when he draws the picture of a particular fair in one of the mountain villages. He says, "What a pretty scene was the fair. Usually the spot was a small woods of oak and hazel, green, fresh, and very beautiful, and a serene, calm summer night. Closing your eyes, you could imagine yourself at the edge of a deep, still pond and you would swear that the frogs, in infinite number, were singing all at once. The sound you hear is the stamp of the fair: the sound of the "terranaulas" of the hundred dancers, in time with the tambourines that the young girls play."<sup>6</sup>

There was one custom connected with the fair which is both interesting and indicative of the type of society: that of the "robla." This expression signifies the treat at the end of a sale, after all the necessary writing and signing of papers. This is a very old custom in the mountain regions and shows the extreme simplicity of the society. Pereda gives one picture of this custom, and one is able to see the geniality, the friendliness of the village people, and that spirit of wanting to surpass the other in manifestations of friendliness and good fellowship.

In this particular incident which Pereda relates, a country man and his wife have a stall in which they have two young cows to sell. The wife sits on a stool, and between mouthfuls of an apple she is eating, puts in a word or two while the husband makes the bargain. The buyer is a young man. With him is an old man in the role of expert judge. Gathered around are many curious ones who have had a hint of the "robla." After much bickering and arguing the young man decides to buy. The little group becomes excited and they all talk at once. One of the witnesses is authorized to go for a gallon of wine to finish the business, or "echar la robla." While he is gone the young man counts out all his money and

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6. Escenas Montañesas, p. 54.



pays it over to the seller. The witness returns with a big jug of wine and a glass. The old expert drinks first and offers this health: "For the health of all those present. May this pair of heifers be a benefit for many years. May we see each other in Heaven." The glass passes round till the last drop of wine is drunk. Then the original owner of the cows, not wishing to do less than the buyer, orders more wine and it is drunk with the same ceremonial and same solemnity, however with greater loquacity on the part of the drinkers.

It happens that the members of this group take the same road home. At the point where the road divides and they take their separate ways there is an inn. One of the men, displaying his geniality, invites them all in for another drink. The invitation is accepted and the author adds that only God could know at what hour that party concluded and under what roof slept our acquaintances of the robla of the two young heifers.<sup>7</sup>

Another amusement or social custom that illustrates the simplicity and wholesomeness of the life of rustic people is that of the "Deshoja" or cornhusking. The cornhusking takes place in a big barn lighted by lanterns. In the middle of the floor there is an enormous pile of ears of corn, and seated around it are the young girls and young men of the village. They are busy shucking the ears and tossing them into great baskets. Suddenly someone may call "la mona" and the young girls scream and hide their heads behind the backs of the boys next to them. "La mona" is the signal that someone has found an ear that is nothing more than black dust, and he who finds it has the right to throw it in the faces of those about him. The merriment continues until the servants of the owner of the corn arrive with a kettlefull of roasted chestnuts and a big jug of wine.<sup>8</sup>

In the absence of the hired laborer, this was the means of getting a great amount of work done. The corn-husking served a double purpose: it provided social

7. *Escenas Montañesas*, p. 51.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 254.

entertainment for the young, and it provided a means of farm help for the landowner. This simple enjoyment may be compared with an evening of amusement in the city: an evening in the cabaret, or the inn, or the club where there is rudeness and drunkenness so different from the wholesome, youthful pleasures of the villages.

In the sea towns, especially in Santander, boat racing was a popular form of amusement. At an annual festival which lasted for several days the great boat race took place. There were two boats in the race, manned by the best oarsmen of the village. All the people sat in the balconies and windows to watch the race. Everywhere were flowers, and bright colors, and signs of festivity. Flying conspicuously was a flag of the colors of Santander. It was the prize for the winning boat. The people had their favorites and there was much friendly rivalry and enthusiasm. Excitement was very great as these two little boats raced to a certain point at a distance of three leagues down the bay, and returned.

In this festival, which afforded the great festal occasion of the year for the people, there were many other amusements and contests. Permeating the festive scenes were the laughter, the happiness, and the gaiety of the rustic people.<sup>9</sup>

Courting in the village in Pereda's age was yet wholly spontaneous and natural. The women in this northern part of Spain were not yet interested in worldly affairs; their interest was primarily in the home. They had not become forward and bold; they were yet modest and retiring and womanly in matters of love. They did not enjoy the intimate association of men as do the women of modern society. The lover visited his sweetheart in the evenings in the presence of the whole family. Most often the evening was spent in the kitchen, for that was the favorite gathering place of the family. A girl was never alone with a young man in the free companionship between the sexes that exists today. Once when

9. Sotileza, p. 447.

Andres spoke of love to Sotileza alone she indignantly reminded him that she could not listen to anything that could not be said before her foster parents. The girl of that earlier society was extremely careful of her actions; she allowed no demonstration of affection and no intimacy whatever. The contract of marriage was arranged formally by the fathers.

Pereda indicates that this simple and natural love, this reserve between the sexes, insured a stronger society; it insured family ties and more sacred homes than those found in societies where association between girls and men is free.

Before modern civilization reached Santander, before the power and wealth of this great city were dreamed of, one of the marked characteristics of that early society was the "raquero" or dock rat. He infested the docks and his only business was to appropriate for himself whatever had no known owner. He left his home, his maternal homeplace, and became an inhabitant of the docks at a very early age, gaining some sort of nickname for himself and soon becoming the close friend of other raqueros. Sometimes he was caught and put in jail; sometimes he lived his whole existence sitting around the dock on a box smoking his pipe and stealing whatever he could; sometimes he changed and grew up to be a fine person. The author says in behalf of this type so popular and so common in that society, "From young shoots so worm-eaten and decayed very frequently come robust and fruitful trunks. The history of this town abounds in brilliant pages dedicated to the honesty, skill, and heroism of the mariners, many of whom in their infancy have followed the part of the type just mentioned."<sup>10</sup>

"To write a book of the customs of the mountains and not dedicate some pages to the "costurera," or seamstress, would be to leave off from Santander one of its most characteristic traces. So well-known is this type in the towns that the weaker sex can almost be divided

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10. *Escenas Montañesas*, p. 50.



into two parts: women who are "costureras" and those who are not."<sup>11</sup> These seamstresses worked in shops and were extremely loyal to their shop. They considered workers in other shops as rivals and would not speak to them or have anything to do with them. They had happy times together. Going to and from their work they laughed and talked with the young men on the streets. But in all love affairs and in all social life they maintained their group loyalty. This type of woman was not the typical Spanish woman, home-loving and reserved. This group had customs, institutions, and traditions all its own. They were a happy group who enjoyed the dances, the comradeship of their companions, and the pleasures of life in general.

Both the "raquero" and "costerura" were particular types identified with that early society of sections of Spain. They formed groups within groups. A profession had bound them together into a class, and in that professional class were found principles of brotherhood and loyalty, principles fundamental to the whole group.

Society of the mountain region was not greatly advanced from its primitive stages as is shown by the beliefs of the people. Certain things tend to show the primitive state of that society. For example, the people feared the supernatural. Pereda says that in the mountains there was not a single village without its witch. The witch was feared by most of the people and abhorred by many. They believed her to be the cause of all the evil that happened in the town. Believing in her magic art they asked impossible deeds of her. If one wished revenge on an enemy he went to the witch for aid. Lovers went to the witch and sought help in matters of the heart. The education of the people of the Montaña had not yet reached the stage in which unexpected and peculiar events could be explained as natural phenomena, and the supernatural and unusual were attributed to persons filled with an evil spirit. In one of the towns there

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11. Ibid., p. 113.

occurred a street fight with the citizens of a neighborhood town. Immediately the old people of the town attributed this evil to the art of the village witch. Three of the prominent citizens hurried to her hut and threatened her with punishment if she did not stop the fight she had begun. Luckily for the witch a sudden storm broke up the fight. Had the storm not occurred the people in vexation might have driven the witch out of the village or so feared her powers that they dared not trouble her.

In the custom of the "derrota", observed in each village, there is further evidence of a society not far removed from a patriarchal form. In the spring of each year the town council decided upon a definite date on which all cattle and herds were to be turned out upon the common grazing ground. This event was heralded with much ceremony. First there was a service in the church, then an elaborate ceremony of letting down the bars and fences of the common. This particular custom is that of an earlier form of society in which all land was held in common. It resembles closely a patriarchal form of society in which the whole group formed one complete unit, all having a common interest and a common ownership.

In summer when the water supply became limited and the grass of the pastures burned, it was the custom to take all the cattle of the village high into the mountains where water was plentiful and grass abundant. The cattle of the villagers were put into one herd and confided to the care of a man who took them into the mountains and cared for them through the whole dry season. In the autumn he returned and all the villagers joyously greeted him and their returned herds.

In such a system of society of common interest, common ownership, and unity, Pereda saw a group unit that formed a more perfect society than the modern one in which there were diversity of interests, selfishness in ownership, and strife among individuals. In Pereda's

opinion, when society became more complex it began to degenerate.

Pereda has faithfully portrayed the social customs of the rustic people of the villages. He has shown drunkenness, false friendship, and many other evils. But predominant are examples of unselfishness, strength of character, resignation to hardship, and devoutness.

(To be continued)





## FACULTY NOTES

During the present summer a valuable addition was made to the library of the college in the form of the Dow Collection. This contains about 2,000 volumes, deposited by Miss Margaret Dow, of the Department of Music, and established as a memorial to her father, the late Dr. James J. Dow, owner of the books.

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Mrs. Ada Wallace Roberts, chairman of the Committee on Alumni Relations, has been engaged in an outstanding and constructive piece of work in the way of cultivation of the graduates of Culver-Stockton, especially of the older classes. Her quarterly numbers of the Bulletin, including the Alumni Directory, are special features of her intensive program.

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The local student publications fraternity (honorary) of Gamma Upsilon, promoted by Mr. C. E. Spencer, Librarian, and Dr. W. E. Schultz, head of the Department of English, is being broadened in scope and launched as a national organization. Culver-Stockton will claim the Alpha chapter.

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Professor Ralph W. Nelson is serving as Assistant in Philosophy at the University of Chicago during the present summer quarter. He had an article, entitled "Evolving Christian Ideas and the Problem of Terms," in the July number of the Crozer Quarterly.

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Dr. Ferris J. Stephens, who furnished the article for the April number of this Quarterly, has done much specialized work in the field of Babylonian research. He was associated at Yale University with the late Professor Albert T. Clay, America's greatest Babylonian scholar, and intends to carry forward some of the plans of his noted teacher for translation and publication.

Dr. Carl Johann, President Emeritus since 1914, has the distinction of having served as president of two colleges. His term of office at Eureka ran from 1887 to 1902, and that at Culver-Stockton from 1902 to 1914.

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Professor Maurine Mays, of the Department of Modern Languages, received the degree of Master of Arts from the University of Missouri at the last commencement.









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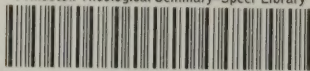
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